United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• United Nations convenes Rwanda pledging conference in Geneva; Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs appeals for immediate marshalling of resources, saying it is not too late for prevention.

• Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs meet under UNPROFOR auspices in Sarajevo to discuss reopening of Butmir road, prisoner-of-war exchanges and anti-sniping agreement.

• Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination begins forty-fifth session in Geneva; Subcommission on Protection of Minorities meets amid preparations for International Decade of Indigenous People.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Peter Hansen, today opened the United Nations pledging conference for Rwanda in Geneva with an appeal for an immediate marshalling of resources by the international community. He noted that there were one million refugees to be cared for in Goma and up to two million displaced persons in the humanitarian protection zone in southern Rwanda. However, there were some causes for optimism -- the Government was cooperating with the United Nations and Kigali was returning to life -- and it was not too late to speak of prevention.

Mr. Hansen said international efforts should focus on three tasks: meeting immediate life-saving needs in the hardist-hit areas, principally Goma; facilitating and then establishing conditions for the safe return of refugees; and ensuring a smooth transition in the humanitarian protection zone as the French-led force there withdrew. He stressed that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) must be provided with the means to fulfil its mandate, noting that Operation Turquoise was due to be completed by 22 August.

Responding to Mr. Hansen's appeal, the European Union pledged 172 million ecus, in addition to a previously announced pledge of 150 million ecus. The United States said President Bill Clinton had requested $320 million from Congress for Rwanda, in addition to $250 million already pledged. Ireland

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announced new donations of 500,000 pounds to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 125,000 pounds to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) today convened a meeting of Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb representatives at Sarajevo airport, according to a spokesman for the Organization. The parties were expected to discuss the possible reopening of the Butmir road, which carried some 90 per cent of the city's supplies before being closed by the Bosnian Serbs. They were also expected to address implementation of an agreement on prisoner-of-war transfers, and a draft anti-sniping instrument. Sarajevo has witnessed a dramatic increase in sniping incidents in recent days.

In a related development, Sarajevo airport was opened to UNPROFOR traffic, while donor countries were discussing a possible resumption of the humanitarian airlift into the city on Thursday.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination yesterday began its forty-fifth session in Geneva. In the next three weeks, the Committee will examine measures taken by Canada, Senegal, Egypt, Iceland, Luxembourg, Spain and Australia to combat racial discrimination, and discuss the situations in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Burundi. Opening the session, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ibrahima Fall said the April elections in South Africa were the most significant development in the last year. By strongly condemning apartheid, the Committee had reinforced the moral dimension of the struggle there. He welcomed Albania's accession to the 1969 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which brought the total number of States parties to 139.

Meanwhile, the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities began its forty-sixth session, during which it will discuss indigenous rights and United Nations action in the face of humanitarian catastrophes and growing ethnic strife. The session coincides with preparations for the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, which begins on 10 December. The Subcommission will consider a draft universal declaration on the rights of indigenous people, prepared by a working group.

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